



News of the VA Stars & Stripes Healthcare Network

January 2005

INTRODUCING YOUR NEW NETWORK NEWSLETTER

Dear Employees and Friends of the Network:

Welcome to the first issue of our bimonthly publication designed to update you on key health care developments occurring within VA and our network. By delivering this information in a newsletter, we believe it will make it easier for you to read the news at a time that is convenient to you. We also think this format will make it easier for you to retrieve information that you may need sometime later on.

I hope you find this new communication informative and useful in your everyday efforts to provide the best service possible to our veterans.

Sincerely,

Charleen R. Szabo, FACHE
Network Director

Thank You For Your Service

Many of our fellow employees in the network are contributing to the ongoing war on terrorism. As Reservists and members of the National Guard, more than 90 have deployed-- or are still deployed-- in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or operations in Kosovo and Bosnia.



Waiting Times

For FY 05, there is a new waiting time performance measure that is based on the percentage of **new patients seen** (or **established patients scheduled**) by a provider within 30 days. Performance clinics that will be tracked are audiology, cardiology, eye care, gastroenterology, mental health, orthopedics, primary care, and urology.



Pres. Bush has signed into law the “Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005.” It includes appropriations for VA. Veterans' health care programs will get \$30.3 billion, \$1.9 billion over last year. Construction for veterans' hospitals and other facilities will grow to \$459 million, the same as the President’s request and \$188 million more than last year.

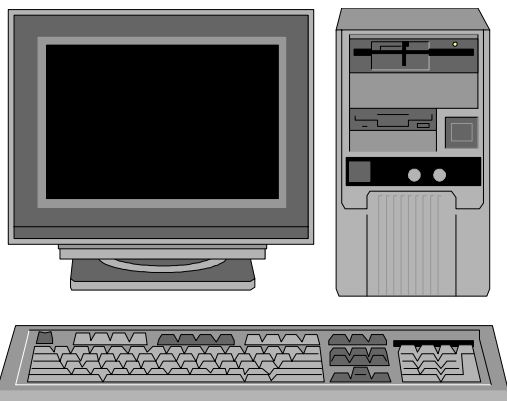
This year VISN 4 has received a budget increase of 2%. That will not even match the expected rate of inflation. If the allocation to VISN 4 is at that level, it will be difficult for our facilities to improve, grow, or start innovative programs that we need for the care of veterans. However, we will do our utmost to maintain all existing programs.



In calendar year 2005, VISN 4 will be participating in an unannounced JCAHO survey process. This is different from prior reviews, when the visit dates for these surveys were known in advance.

Care Coordination

VHA’s Office of Care Coordination has officially recognized VISN 4’s Care Coordination/Home Telehealth program as an operational program. Our VAMCs are now developing patient lists in an effort to enroll eligible, interested veterans into the program. The goal of Care Coordination is to promote the health of veterans who have high-risk, chronic conditions, and help them avoid the complications that might lead to hospitalization or long-term care.



Serving More Veterans

In FY 2004, our network treated nearly 296,000 patients. This was over 11,000 more than in FY 2003, a 4% increase.

On the Internet

For more information, visit our network’s Web site at: www.starsandstripes.med.va.gov